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C O N F I D E N T I A L ZAGREB 000116

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DEPT FOR U/S BURNS, EUR FOR A/S FRIED AND DAS DICARLO
FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/21/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [HR](#) [KV](#)
SUBJECT: MGKV01: CROATIA AND RECOGNITION OF KOSOVO

REF: ZAGREB 112

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ROBERT A. BRADTKE FOR REASONS 1.4 B/D

¶1. (C) The Croatian Government, at the highest levels, has confirmed that it will recognize Kosovo. In meetings on February 21 with Codel Tanner, President Mesic and Prime Minister Sanader stated that Croatia would recognize Kosovo, but both said that Croatia would not be among the first countries to recognize and would wait until a majority of EU countries had formally done so. Mesic and Sanader noted the complex history of Croatia's relations with Serbia, and Sanader stressed that Croatia wanted to keep open lines of communication to Serbia.

¶2. (C) In a separate conversation with me later on February 21, Milorad Pupovac, the most prominent leader of Croatia's Serbs, argued passionately for a brief waiting period before recognition. "Croatia is not Costa Rica," Pupovac said. Croatia was Serbia's neighbor, and memories of the 1990's were still fresh. Premature recognition of Kosovo could risk setting back a decade of progress towards reconciliation not only between Serbia and Croatia but also between Croats and Serbs inside Croatia.

¶3. (C) Based upon Mesic's and Sanader's assurances, I am convinced Croatia will recognize Kosovo within the next few weeks. I strongly believe, however, that we should allow them some space to manage the precise timing.
Bradtke